

YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT *Tiaris olivacea*

J.) Common; W.) Common; O.) Occasionally seen.
Common by roadsides and in scrub. Regular in winter.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

J.) Rare; W.) No mention; O.) Only seen on Cayman Brac.
One female seen in logwood in 1983. Probably regular but rare in winter.

INDIGO BUNTING *Passerina cyanea*

J.) Uncommon; W.) 2 only; O.) One seen.

Not seen in 1981, but several in 1983 in changing plumage, on fringe of cultivation, and several reported locally. Apparently regular in winter.

CUBAN BULLFINCH *Melopyrrha nigra*

J.) Common; W.) Uncommon; O.) Common.

Seen frequently in various types of undergrowth. Tame but silent. Regular in winter.

SAVANNAH SPARROW *Passerculus sandwichensis*

J.) 2 records; W.) Single birds flushed; O.) Not seen.

Not seen by me. Probably irregular but uncommon in winter.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW *Ammodramus savannarum*

J.) Fairly common; W.) No mention; O.) No mention.

2 in savannah scrub in 1983, but reported regularly (P. Bradley). Apparently regular in winter.

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Notes on coastal birds of Puerto Melo, Chubut, Argentina

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Recent ornithological discoveries in coastal areas of the Province of Chubut, Argentina, demonstrate that much remains to be learned about the distributions of birds in this zoogeographically important region. These finds include new breeding localities for several littoral species (Zapata 1965, Olrog 1967, Navas

1970, Erize 1972, Daciuk 1975), the discovery of a new subspecies (perhaps species) of gull (Devillers 1977) and a new species of steamer-duck (Humphrey & Thompson 1981). Substantial harvesting of Magellanic Penguins *Spheniscus magellanicus* in the 1800s, recent mortality of penguins, cormorants and ducks caused by oil spills (Jehl 1975) and apparent declines in breeding populations of guano-producing cormorants (F. Fauring), emphasize the need for current information on the avifauna of this region. In addition, information on the birds of Chubut can be found in general references on neotropical birds (Murphy 1936, Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Olrog 1959, Blake 1977), older regional works (Durnford 1877, 1878, Burmeister 1888, Peters 1923), and more recent avifaunal surveys (Bo 1958, Zapata 1969, Boswall & Prytherch 1972, Boswall 1973, Jehl *et al.* 1973, Jehl 1974, Jehl & Rumboll 1976).

During 5 visits between 1960 and 1982 we made observations that add to the knowledge of several littoral species of bird in the vicinity of Puerto Melo, Chubut, Argentina, especially regarding the status of the Flying Steamer-Duck *Tachyeres patachonicus* and the newly discovered White-headed Flightless Steamer-Duck *T. leucocephalus*.

STUDY AREA

Puerto Melo (44°01'S, 65°50'W) is located in a well protected, island-studded bay c. 30 km SSW of Camarones on the Atlantic coast of the Province of Chubut, Argentina. A map of the region is provided in Humphrey & Livezey (1983). The climate is cool temperate. Tidal flux averages 6 m, exposing extensive mud flats in bays and provides intermittent land connections to several near-shore islands. Observation and collection of birds at Puerto Melo and immediate vicinity were made 5-8 Nov 1960, 14 Sep to 7 Oct 1979, 3-17 Feb and 13-17 Dec 1981, and 12-16 Jan 1982. Data also were collected during excursions to the following sites in the region: Isla Blanca (7 Nov 1960), Isla Tova (18 and 25 Sep 1979), Isla Tovita (25 Sep 1979), Punta Táfor (30 Sep 1979), and Isla Arce (13 Jan 1982). Specimens are on deposit at the Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence (KUMNH), the Department of Biology, Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas, and the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

SOUTHERN GIANT PETREL *Macronectes giganteus*. Previously unknown breeding colonies of giant petrels were discovered on Isla Arce and Isla Gran Robredo, Jan 1982 (Humphrey & Livezey 1983). Nearest previously known breeding localities are in the Falkland Islands.

WHITE-CHINNED PETREL *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. One female was collected 5 Oct 1979 as it followed our boat near Isla Escobar.

BLUE-EYED CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax atriceps*. 2 seen on 5 Oct and one on 17 Dec in a colony of King Cormorants *P. albiventer* on Isla Escobar; the latter is an abundant breeding species on Isla Blanca (c. 1000 nests) and Isla Escobar (250-300 nests). The breeding distribution and abundance of *P. atriceps* in Chubut is uncertain. Behn *et al.* (1955) and Devillers & Terschuren (1978) reviewed the systematic relationships of *P. albiventer* and *P. atriceps*, considered by some to be morphs of a single species.

ROSY-BILLED POCHARD *Netta peposaca*. A flock of 12 seen in Puerto Melo Bay on 16 Dec 1981. Blake (1977) stated that this species occurs in Argentina south only to Río Negro Province. Evidently the first record for Chubut; previous Patagonian records were from Río Negro Province (Peters 1928), Santa Cruz Province (*pers. obs.*) and Tierra del Fuego (Keith 1970).

WHITE-HEADED FLIGHTLESS STEAMER-DUCK *Tachyeres leucocephalus*. This abundant resident, described by Humphrey & Thompson (1981) from this locality, was confused until recently with its smaller, flighted, but otherwise closely similar congener *T. patachonicus*. The species breeds commonly throughout the region, sometimes nesting in dense aggregations on offshore islands (Humphrey & Livezey, in press). Downy young were observed throughout Nov-Feb.

FLYING STEAMER-DUCK *Tachyeres patachonicus*. This species is a spring and summer visitor (Sep-Jan), its winter status unknown. Possibly breeds, but most previous references to nests of *T. patachonicus* (Boswall & Prytherch 1972, Boswall 1973, Boswall & MacIver 1979, Daciuk 1976a) pertain to those of *T. leucocephalus*. Unless seen in flight, distinction in the field from *T. leucocephalus*, with which it sometimes flocks, is difficult. All 3 specimens of *T. patachonicus* collected from Puerto Melo were yearlings but capable of flight, suggesting that Flying Steamer-Ducks in this region are young, non-breeding birds.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER *Charadrius semipalmatus*. One was seen on 26 Sep 1979. Blake (1977) stated that this species occurs in Argentina south only to Santa Cruz Province, although Humphrey *et al.* (1970) listed a single bird from Isla Grande, Tierra del Fuego.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*. A single individual was sighted on 3 Feb 1981. Blake (1977) stated that this species is less common east of the Andes than in Chile, and occurs regularly south only to Buenos Aires. The only other Patagonian record is a single bird at Río Grande, Tierra del Fuego (Jehl & Rumboll 1976).

LESSER GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis dominica*. Single birds were seen on 12 Feb and 13 Dec. 1981. Blake (1977) gave the southern limit of distribution in Argentina as the provinces of Mendoza, Cordoba, and Buenos Aires. Evidently our 2 records, 2 November sightings at San Blas (Devillers & Terschuren 1977) and one January specimen from Tierra del Fuego (Humphrey *et al.* 1970), are the only records for this species in Patagonia.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT *Limosa haemastica*. Single birds were seen on 12 and 16 Feb 1981. Dabbene (1920) and Jehl & Rumboll (1976) listed other records for this species that is a scarce visitor in the provinces of Chubut, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes*. 1-15 were seen on 5 dates Sep-Dec. This species is casual to uncommon south of Río Negro Province (Blake 1977).

SUBANTARCTIC SKUA *Catharacta a. antarctica*. An uncommon and local breeder on several islands, including Isla Blanca, Isla Arce (aggregation of 75-100 nests), and Islote Gran Robredo. The resident subspecies also nests at Punta Tombo (Daciuk 1975) and the Falkland Islands (Devillers 1978).

DOLPHIN GULL *Leucophaeus scoresbii*. Nests locally on islands at the edges of coromorant colonies (F. Fauring). The northernmost known breeding locality is Punta Tombo, Chubut (Daciuk 1977).

BAND-TAILED GULL *Larus belcheri*. Adults were seen near island nesting colonies of *L. dominicanus* on Islote Laguna in Puerto Melo bay and at Punta Táfor,

and adults with juveniles were seen in February at Puerto Melo; probably nests locally. Olrog (1967) first documented the breeding of *L. belcheri* on the Atlantic coast of Argentina at Bahía San Blas, Buenos Aires Province. Devillers (1977) argued persuasively that the Atlantic population be considered specifically distinct (*L. atlanticus*).

CAYENNE (SANDWICH) TERN *Sterna sandvicensis* subsp. Probably breeds locally and is known to nest at other localities in coastal Chubut (Zapata 1965, Daciuk 1972, 1973, 1976b). Most individuals have the entirely yellow bill typical of South American *S. s. eurygnatha* (Voous 1968, Blake 1977); however, on 5 and 8 Feb 1981 we saw 2 which had the black, yellow-tipped bills characteristic of *S. s. sandvicensis* which breeds in North America and the Caribbean (Junge & Voous 1955). The taxonomy and geographic variation in the species or species-group remain problematic (Buckley & Buckley 1984).

BLACK SKIMMER *Rynchops niger*. 3 were seen on 15 Dec 1981. Blake (1977) stated that this species breeds south only to Buenos Aires Province, and is casual to Santa Cruz Province.

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